

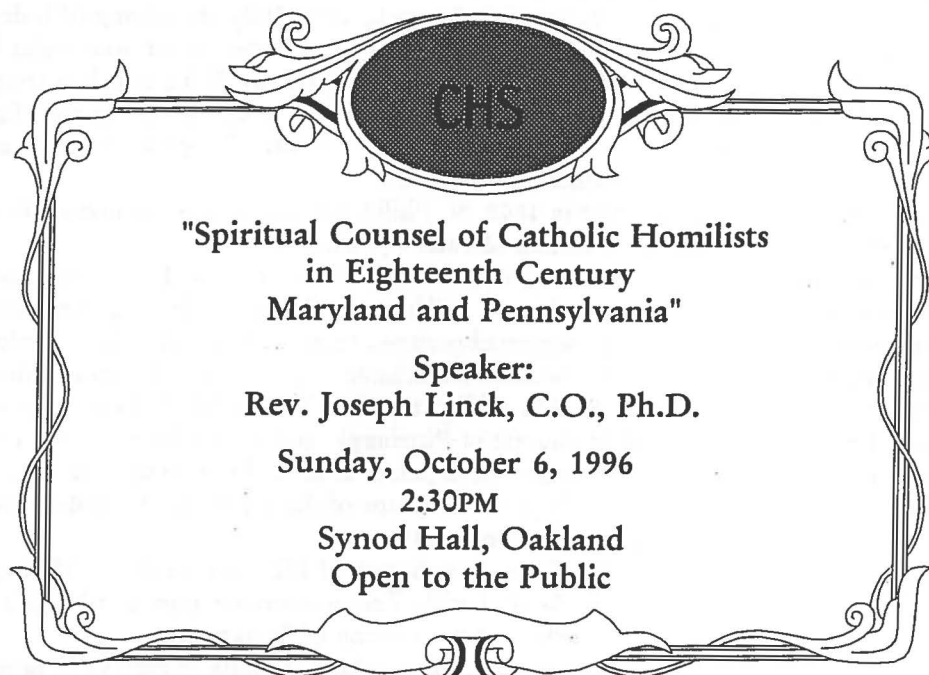
GATHERED FRAGMENTS

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HISTORY OF ST. PHILIP CHURCH

[Editor's note: This history was originally printed in a commemorative book in 1989, the year of the church's 150th anniversary. It was written by the album committee, which included William O'Connell, chairman, Robert Bahl, Joe Bovard, Dorothy Chmiel, Madelon Conniff, Patricia Covington, Mary Jane Culp, Sr. Annina Fox, Helen Fromholzer, Mary Gabig, John Heavill, Eilleen Holler, Charles Jacob, Judy Kueshner, Frank McKenna, Jennie McNally, Joe & Lucy Patterson, Helen Rust, Mary Jane Volk, and Sharon Welch.]

The district where St. Philip stands was originally called Broadhead, named for Colonel Daniel Broadhead, who had been commander of Fort Pitt during the American Revolution. Settlers came in slowly and among them was a young Irish immigrant, James Flanigan, who came from County Down about the year 1824 with his wife, Margaret Campbell, and their son Bernard (Barney). They stayed for a short time in Pittsburgh (the Sligo district) before buying a farm with a substantial log house near the present site of St. Philip. Here James prospered as a farmer and drover, the latter being a lucrative business at the time because of the demand for meat by the fast growing community of Pittsburgh.

The Flanigan family grew and the father, who regretted that their rural home made it impossible to assist at Mass, arranged for a priest to come from St. Paul, later the Pittsburgh Cathedral, once a month. Mass was celebrated for the small Catholic community in the large front room of the Flanigan home. This house, the Crafton "Mass House", is still standing, although it has been remodeled and has been moved about 150 feet from its original site.

For about ten years the arrangement of having Mass once a month in the Flanigan house continued, the Catholics of the district driving into Pittsburgh on other Sundays. Then it was decided to build a church. A lot, containing one acre and 95 perches, was acquired from Philip Smith, a Philadelphia merchant, on August 20, 1938, "for the use and benefit of the Roman Catholic congregation of St. Clair Township and of the neighborhood, to be used, occupied and enjoyed by them as a cemetery or burying ground, also for the erection thereon of a church for the use and benefit of said congregation and of the Roman Catholic religion forever."

Work was started at once on a brick building, 25 by 40 feet, which was completed in time to be dedicated by



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HISTORY - THE LIGHT OF FAITH



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Rt. Rev. Francis Patrick Kenrick, Bishop of the Diocese of Philadelphia (at that time comprising the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) on his visitation to the district on July 25, 1839.

From the Diary and Visitation Record of Bishop F.P. Kenrick, 1839: "July the twenty-fifth day. I dedicated to divine service a church under the invocation of St. Philip the Apostle, distant about four miles from Pittsburgh, near Chartiers' Creek. The ground (for this church) was given by Philip Smith, a truly worthy Catholic, and esteemed for his sincere and upright life. The Rev. John O'Reilly celebrated the High Mass; and there were present also the Rev. Edward Garland and the Rev. Joseph Cody. Jeremiah Dunlevy, a very good man who lives not far from the church, entertained us at dinner."

When the Diocese of Pittsburgh was erected in 1843 St. Philip was one of seven churches listed in Allegheny County, according to the journal of Bishop Michael O'Connor.

For the first year the care of the new church was in the hands of Rev. John O'Reilly, then pastor of St. Paul, Pittsburgh. Late in 1840, however, Rev. Andrew P. Gibbs took charge, celebrating Mass once a month, and dividing his time between two other widely separated parishes, those at Pine Creek and Wexford, making his journey on horseback. Father Gibbs was one of the most remarkable of the pioneer priests of this district.

The same is true of the next priest who served St. Philip, the Rev. Thomas McCullagh, who was the first priest ordained in and for the newly established Diocese of Pittsburgh, and whose short life was crowded with remarkable achievements. Father McCullagh, who served as pastor of several important churches, was for a time rector of the diocesan seminary, St. Michael, and he also was editor of the Pittsburgh Catholic. He shepherded the flock at St. Philip for a few years after his ordination in 1844.

Rev. John Power came in 1846, Father John Tuigg, later Bishop of Pittsburgh, came in 1850 and Rev. James McGowan was assigned to St. Philip in 1851. St. James Parish, Temperanceville, now Pittsburgh's West End, was formed in 1854 and for the next twelve years St. Philip was a mission of St. James.

Rev. James McGowan was in charge of the two churches in 1854, Rev. John Baptist O'Connor and Rev. Cornelius M. Sheehan in 1855, Rev. John Hackett in 1856-57, and Rev. Matthew Carroll from 1857 to 1870. Under Father Carroll the church was lengthened by twenty-five feet.

The parish of St. Luke had been established in nearby Mansfield, now Carnegie, in 1866 and St. Philip was made a mission of that parish in 1870. Pastors who had charge of St. Philip were Rev. John O'Gorman Scanlon, 1867-71, Rev. W.A. Nolan, 1871-73, and Rev. Peter F. May, 1873-74. In 1874 St. Philip was given its first resident pastor in the person of Rev. John Ward, who lived in a small house on Thomas Street, and who remained less than a year. On March 15, 1874, Father Ward baptized John McCabe, the first baptism in the then St. Philip Parish. Father Ward was succeeded by Father Kaib, who resided at the home of Bernard Rogers, one of the pioneer members of the parish, in Greentree.

Father Kaib installed the main altar in the church and during his pastorate a private school for the children of the parish was opened in a stone house on Afton Avenue, near Richmond Street. Miss Purcell was the teacher. During his pastorate he witnessed the first marriage on November 19, 1874.

Until 1878 there was no resident pastor, but a priest came every Sunday from St. Luke or St. Mary (German), McKees Rocks, where a parish had been established earlier. Rev. James Tahany and Rev. Jeremiah O'Callaghan, alter of Coyleville, were among these priests.

Rev. James Keenoy became the pastor in 1878. He found a congregation of only forty families, as the result of the carving of new parishes from the original territory of St. Philip. He built the rectory which was later replaced by the present house in 1941. He built and opened a parish school, with the Sisters of Charity in charge. This school, started in 1887, was continued until 1892 when the depression of that year forced its closing.

Under Father Keenoy the second addition to the little church was made, providing a sanctuary and two side altars. Father Keenoy also secured from Charles Craft, for whom Crafton Borough is named, the gift of a piece of property adjoining the original plot. Part of this was set aside for a cemetery and on the remainder the new church and school buildings were afterward erected. During the pastorate of Father Keenoy the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered for the first time by the Rt. Rev. John Tuigg in November 1878.

Father Keenoy left in 1893 and was succeeded by Rev. J.R. Regis Canevin, who was to become Coadjutor Bishop and later Bishop of Pittsburgh. He was created titular Archbishop of Pelusium after he retired. Father



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Canevin was at St. Philip for only one year. Rev. P.J. O'Neill became pastor in 1895 and remained until 1898. During his pastorate he established Saturday and Sunday classes for the children, taught by the Sisters of Mercy. This arrangement continued until the present school was built and opened in 1915.

In 1898 a young priest ordained ten years, came to St. Philip. His name was Father William Charles Kelty. Between 1898 and 1953 Father Kelty undertook a complete renewal and rebuilding program that gave the parish its present church, dedicated by Bishop J. F. Regis Canevin on February 8, 1906. The gothic structure, designed by William P. Ginther of Akron is built of stone in cruciform design and it seats 800 people. The contract price for the building, exclusive of inner decoration, was \$56,000.

Other buildings undertaken in Father Kelty's program included a school in 1915, the addition of classrooms, a gymnasium and bowling alley to the school in 1929 and a new rectory in 1941. Father Kelty encouraged the Sisters of Charity of Greensburg to staff what was considered the finest school building in the Pittsburgh diocese. He saw pupil enrollment increase from 200 students to over 1200.

At the beginning of 1953 Father Kelty, feeling the weight of his ninety years and realizing that he could no longer carry on with his usual vigor, petitioned the Bishop of Pittsburgh, the Most Rev. John F. Dearden, to accept his resignation. In deference to this plea the Bishop agreed and on January 15, 1953, Father Kelty became Pastor Emeritus of the parish, whose pastor he had been for fifty-five years.

On January 22, 1953, Father Kelty was succeeded by Father William J. McCashin founder and for thirty-seven years pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Burgettstown. Just as time had taken its toll of Father Kelty, so too had the buildings erected by him felt the wear of years. The fifty year old lighting system in the church and the coal heating boiler were replaced.

Because of the large number of children attending the Sunday nine o'clock Mass and to enable their parents to accompany them, the church basement was remodeled to make it suitable for the celebration of Holy Mass. The altar and communion rail of the first church were transferred to the carpeted sanctuary. After the necessary minor improvements to the school, rectory and convent had been made, it became obvious that an addition to the school was needed. A new building with six classrooms and modern cafeteria was dedicated in September 1954 by the Most Rev. John F. Dearden. To make it possible to erect this building, many bodies had to be transferred from that part of the cemetery that was to be used for the new addition. The parapet of the old school building was in poor condition, so it was removed and replaced.

In the spring of 1955 a three acre plot of land on West Steuben Street (the site of the present Crafton Park) was purchased as the site for a future St. Philip High School. This plan was abandoned when the diocese decided to build Canevin District High School. Other improvements undertaken by Father McCashin included an addition to the convent in 1953 and the restoration of its chapel early in 1960.

On June 21, 1955 God called to Himself Father Kelty, the venerable Pastor Emeritus, at the age of ninety-three and a half years. He was laid to rest in Calvary Cemetery after a Solemn Pontifical Mass celebrated by the Most Rev. Ralph L. Hayes, D.D., Bishop of Davenport, Iowa, a son of St. Philip Parish.

To commemorate the golden jubilee of the dedication of the church in 1956 it was decided to remodel and redecorate the interior. Three marble altars, a marble pulpit and communion rail were installed by the Joseph Poli Company. The entire church was repainted, the pews were brought back to the original wood and refinished and new confessionals replaced the old ones. The Stations of the Cross were repainted and imbedded in the walls by a Franciscan priest in February 1956. The original Moeller organ, a gift of Andrew Carnegie, was replaced by the present Casavant instrument.

As strict with himself as he was with others, Father McCashin wisely saved to place the parish in excellent financial condition, for he knew that problems were coming. These were not to be his problems. While on his way to pick up flowers for the Christmas altar decorations Father McCashin was seriously injured when his car overturned and he was crushed beneath it. Age and injuries were against him and on February 7, 1967, he died in Mercy Hospital.

Vincent M. Leonard, Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh, was appointed to succeed Father McCashin in 1967. He served as pastor until he was called to be Bishop of Pittsburgh in 1970. By 1966 the congregation of St. Philip had grown so large that it was decided to divide the parish. The Ascension Parish was established in Ingram and Father Glenn T. Conner, assistant pastor of St. Philip, was appointed to head the new parish.



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Bishop Leonard directed the renovation of the school, modernizing the classrooms and facilities.

Msgr. Robert P. Garland, former secretary to Cardinal Wright, followed Bishop Leonard as pastor in 1970. He came at a time when the decisions of Vatican II introduced many changes in the liturgy and practices of the Church. Msgr. Garland shepherded the congregation through this difficult period. In March 1971 a new marble altar, facing the congregation, was installed. With the division of the parish it was no longer necessary to use the church basement for services, so the space was converted to a parish hall, and it was dedicated to the memory of Father Kelty on February 25, 1973.

Other improvements made by Msgr. Garland included painting the church interior and the construction of a ramp entrance for the use of the handicapped. On April 22, 1984 St. Mary's Way was dedicated for the use of the disabled. A small stained glass window, called the Gate of Heaven, was installed above the door. Kindergarten and pre-school programs were begun.

A small frame building, the former Steebach butcher shop, was renovated to provide a meeting place for various parish groups. Much of the interior renovation was carried out by members of the Bible Study Group and the Prayer Group. Hope House was dedicated on April 1, 1978. Other parish groups who use the facilities include the Women's Craft Group and the St. Vincent DePaul Society.

In 1986, after seventeen years as pastor of St. Philip, Msgr. Garland was reassigned to become pastor of St. Mary, Cecil. He was succeeded by Father William J. Winter, formerly pastor of Holy Innocents Parish, Sheraden.

In the short time that Father Winter was at St. Philip he was active, leading the congregation to a better understanding of the mandates of Vatican II and encouraging lay participation in liturgical services. He continued the improvements begun by Msgr. Garland. The most notable project to date was the restoration of the rose window in 1987, at a cost of \$90,000. Other undertakings planned included repairs to the school roof, new windows for the school, and repainting the church. The current pastor is Rev. James J. Schmitt and the parochial vicar is Rev. Kenneth R. Keene.

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